

To: Senate Ethics, Elections and Local Government Committee  
Senator Mitch Holmes, Chairman  
From: Commissioner Randy Duncan, Chairman, Board of Saline County Commissioners  
Subject: SB 109  
Date: February 11, 2013

Senators, I am here today to register my strong opposition to SB 109, a bill which would prohibit our county commission in Saline County from paying membership dues to our state association, the Kansas Association of Counties, if it lobbies the State in our behalf. Although we do not employ a lobbyist on our staff nor do we engage the services of a lobbyist for Saline County, this bill would not allow us to do so – even if we encountered a situation which required it.

County commissioners are close to the people. We shop at the same stores, go to the same churches, and meet our citizens on a daily basis. We talk about local control a lot, because we believe in it. And we believe in it, because we think it ultimately serves our citizens best.

Senate Bill 109 would limit free speech and free association and participation in our democratic process. We as local officials have a right to join an association if we choose. If our constituents do not agree with our action on this, or any other decision, the election process (i.e. ballot box) makes us accountable. After reading this bill, I have to wonder: is this even constitutional? How can our rights as locally elected officials to associate with others and communicate our position on issues be taken away?

As county commissioners, we are busy every day of every week governing and making decisions on behalf of our counties. There is no way we can individually keep up on all of the statewide issues. Our membership in the Kansas Association of Counties not only brings us information about what is happening in the Statehouse, we are also able to take advantage of educational opportunities so we can learn about how counties and the State can work together better, and how we as county commissioners can do our jobs better.

Senators, I ask you to not move forward on this bill, and instead – if you have concerns about how counties operate – let us know so we can sit down together and come to a meeting of the minds.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.